

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 683

SP 033 574

AUTHOR Enger, John M.; And Others
TITLE Severity of Disciplinary Incidents Contrasted between Principals and Teachers at Elementary and Secondary Levels.
PUB DATE Nov 91
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Lexington, KY, November 15, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Responsibility; Comparative Analysis; *Discipline Policy; Elementary School Students; *Elementary School Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; *Principals; Secondary School Students; *Secondary School Teachers; *Teacher Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS Behavior Descriptions; *Rank Order

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess principal and teacher perceptions of who is responsible for handling selected disciplinary incidents at the elementary and secondary levels; and to order these situations from the most to the least severe. It was hypothesized that the more severe incidents were perceived to be the principal's responsibility and the least severe the teacher's. A set of 24 situational vignettes was developed to cover a variety of disciplinary incidents encountered in schools. A random sample of principals and teachers at the elementary and secondary levels was asked to rank the severity of disciplinary situations. Analysis of the four respondent groups revealed disciplinary situations where principals and teachers agreed and disagreed. Findings suggest that when specific areas of disagreement between administrators and teachers can be pinpointed, procedures can be developed to accommodate this ambiguity of responsibility. In developing policies and determining responsibilities for handling discipline problems, the role of the student should not be overlooked. Further research should include student perceptions on the issue. (LL)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED341683

**SEVERITY OF DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS CONTRASTED
BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS AT
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS**

by

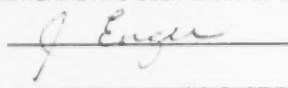
John M. Enger,	Arkansas State University
Carol L. Beasley,	Piggott (AR) Public Schools
Karen J. Curtner,	Jonesboro (AR) Public Schools
Marsha A. Huber,	Jonesboro (AR) Public Schools
Joe L. Morrow,	Holcomb (MO) Public Schools
Sandra E. Rahim,	University of Michigan
Charlotte F. Wright,	Weiner (AR) Public Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY



TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association,
Lexington, Kentucky, November, 15, 1991.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SP033 574

SEVERITY OF DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS CONTRASTED BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS AT ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY LEVELS

Discipline continues to be one of the biggest problems in the nation's schools (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1991) with the responsibility for intervention resting with classroom teachers and principals. Although the handling of discipline problems is usually seen as a classroom rather than a school problem, discipline per se is usually seen as the administration's concern (Duke, 1977). Teachers identify discipline as one of their most common professional problems, however, several studies indicate teachers feel the discipline problem in the instructional setting is coupled with administrative inefficiency and lack of administrative support (Bruner & Felder, 1983; Turner, 1987). Discipline has become a more complex problem since many student rights have been established by the federal courts, forcing principals to be astute and cautious in dealing with these situations and avoiding legal difficulties (Dellinger, 1981).

Leadership style of the principal appears to be a critical factor in studies identifying safe schools and schools noted for good discipline (Calabrese, 1985; NAESP, 1981). The principal as the instructional leader is expected to maintain discipline with direct administrator action while being a highly visible, strong and dedicated individual (Reed & Himmler, 1985; Bruner & Felder, 1983; Short, 1988). Although perceived as the instructional leader, principals report that most of their day is spent in administrative and discipline tasks (Giannangelo & Malone, 1987). Students, teachers and principals recognize handling discipline is an important duty of the principal (Easterly, 1983; Krajewski, 1977; McEwan, 1985; Newberg & Glatthorn, 1982), but some claim it shouldn't be (Krajewski, 1977).

Teacher responsibilities are generally reported in the realm of the classroom rather than the total school environment. Teachers are responsible for organizing and managing classrooms (Sanford, Emmer & Clements, 1983), providing for a productive climate (Kindsvatter, Wilen & Ishler, 1988) and maintaining discipline in the classroom (Easterly, 1983). However, teachers' abilities to exercise classroom management skills are perceived to be greater by principals than by the teachers themselves (Richardson, 1985). Although principals and teachers share the responsibility for handling disciplinary incidents as they arise, ambiguity of who is responsible can be compounded by (a) the severity of the incident, (b) whether the incident occurred in or outside of the classroom, and (c) whether or not the incident would be directly covered by the stated discipline policy of the school.

Purpose of the Study

This study is a forerunner to a study conducted at the elementary and secondary levels to determine who teachers and principals think is responsible for handling selected disciplinary incidents. A set of 24 vignettes, or situations was developed to cover the variety of disciplinary incidents encountered in schools. Analysis of the responses will indicate disciplinary situations where principals and

teachers agree on who is responsible for handling the incident, and disciplinary incidents where they disagree. When specific areas of disagreement between administrators and teachers can be pin-pointed, procedures can be developed to accommodate this ambiguity of responsibility.

In planning for the subsequent study on discipline responsibility, the severity of the incidents was a concern in analyzing the responsibility for handling the 24 situations. Generally, the more severe incidents were hypothesized as being the principal's responsibility, whereas, the least severe incidents were perceived to be the teacher's responsibility. Thus, both principals and teachers were asked for their perceptions of the severity of each of the 24 disciplinary situations. Since the severity of the problem may be viewed differently at different levels of instruction, this study was conducted at both the elementary and secondary levels. Average severity ratings were used to rank the incidents from most to least severe. Agreement between the respondent groups was assessed by correlating the average severity ratings for each of the 24 disciplinary incidents. Average ratings were also contrasted by position and level.

Method

This study was a comparative survey which used a mailed questionnaire. Principals and teachers at both the elementary and secondary levels were asked to give their perceptions of the severity of selected disciplinary situations. A set of 24 vignettes was developed to represent a variety of disciplinary incidents encountered in schools today. School personnel (representing various levels and locales) critiqued and evaluated the vignettes; disciplinary incidents were added, deleted and edited until the final set of 24 was finalized. Each vignette took the disciplinary incident to a point where a determination of who was responsible for handling the situation would have to be made. In this investigation, the respondent was asked to rate the severity of the situation using a four-point Likert scale ranging from extremely severe (scale value = 1) to a minor infraction (scale value = 4).

The questionnaires were sent to random samples of 80 principals and 80 teachers, each stratified with 40 at the elementary level and 40 at the secondary level. Responses were anonymous, however, questionnaires were identifiable by respondent's position (principal or teacher) and level (elementary or secondary). On return of the questionnaires, items were tallied by respondent group, averaged by item, ranked by item, correlated and contrasted by item across all respondent groups.

Results

Of 160 questionnaires sent out, 99 were returned (62 percent). Principals had a higher response rate (71 percent) than teachers (52 percent), and secondary responses (69 percent) were returned at a higher rate than elementary responses (55

percent). Table 1 identifies the 24 vignettes in the random order they were arranged on the questionnaire. For each vignette or disciplinary incident, the overall average rating is followed by the severity ranking (1 = most severe, to 24 = least severe). These two columns are followed by average ratings by position (for principals and teachers) and by level (elementary and secondary). Table 2 continues the breakdown of the findings for the four respondent groups: elementary principals, secondary principals, elementary teachers and secondary teachers.

Table 1
Average Principal and Teacher Ratings
and Elementary and Secondary Ratings
for the 24 Disciplinary Incidents

Disciplinary Incident	Overall		Principal		Teacher		Elem		Sec	
	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank
Excessive Profanity Used	2.05	7	2.12	7	1.95	8	2.09	8	2.02	7
Drugs Are Observed	1.41	2	1.50	2	1.29	2	1.33	2	1.47	2
Student Alcohol Odor	1.52	3	1.61	3	1.38	3	1.36	3	1.64	3
Student Caught Smoking	2.59	12	2.71	13	2.43	13	2.25	9.5	2.87	22
Student Has Fireworks	2.50	10	2.67	11	2.27	10	2.32	11	2.65	11.5
Excessive Tardiness	2.72	17	2.73	14	2.71	20.5	2.74	17	2.71	15
Students Kissing	2.64	15	2.82	17.5	2.39	11	2.52	13	2.74	19
Student Caught Stealing	1.77	4.5	1.91	6	1.57	4	1.63	4	1.87	5.5
Student Cheats on Test	2.35	9	2.54	9	2.10	9	2.25	9.5	2.44	9
Neglecting Homework	2.58	11	2.68	12	2.43	13	2.41	12	2.71	15
Problem at Ball Game	1.88	6	1.88	5	1.88	6	1.89	6	1.87	5.5
Show of Disrespect	1.77	4.5	1.79	4	1.74	5	1.73	5	1.80	4
Vandalism/Graffiti	2.63	14	2.65	10	2.60	16.5	2.60	15	2.65	11.5
Bullying Younger Ones	2.78	20	2.93	22	2.57	15	2.75	18	2.80	21
Cafeteria Duty Problem	2.76	18.5	2.82	17.5	2.67	19	2.82	19	2.71	15
Student Cliques	3.04	24	3.14	24	2.90	24	3.05	24	3.04	24
Bad Attitude/Won't Try	2.61	13	2.75	15	2.43	13	2.53	14	2.67	13
Practical Joker	2.88	23	2.95	23	2.79	22	2.84	20	2.91	23
Fighting in Classroom	2.83	21	2.91	21	2.71	20.5	2.95	22	2.72	17
Making Fun of Handicap	2.71	16	2.80	16	2.60	16.5	2.86	21	2.59	10
Playground Duty Problem	2.84	22	2.86	20	2.81	23	2.98	23	2.73	18
Chronic Lying	2.76	18.5	2.84	19	2.63	18	2.73	16	2.78	20
Firearm at School	1.23	1	1.25	1	1.21	1	1.21	1	1.25	1
Emotional Disturbance	2.07	8	2.19	8	1.90	7	2.00	7	2.13	8

Table 2

Average Elementary and Secondary Principal and
Elementary and Secondary Teacher Ratings
for the 24 Disciplinary Incidents

Disciplinary Incident	Overall		Elem Principal		Sec Principal		Elem Teacher		Sec Teacher	
	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank	Rtg	Rank
Excessive Profanity Used	2.05	7	2.21	8	2.06	7	1.95	8	1.95	7
Drugs Are Observed	1.41	2	1.48	2	1.52	2	1.15	3	1.41	2
Student Alcohol Odor	1.52	3	1.58	3	1.64	3	1.10	1.5	1.64	3
Student Caught Smoking	2.59	12	2.46	11	2.91	20	2.00	9	2.82	23.5
Student Has Fireworks	2.50	10	2.38	9	2.88	18.5	2.25	12	2.29	10
Excessive Tardiness	2.72	17	2.70	14.5	2.76	11.5	2.80	19	2.64	19
Students Kissing	2.64	15	2.75	17	2.88	18.5	2.25	12	2.52	15.5
Student Caught Stealing	1.77	4.5	1.87	5	1.94	6	1.35	4	1.77	4.5
Student Cheats on Test	2.35	9	2.42	10	2.64	9.5	2.05	10	2.14	9
Neglecting Homework	2.58	11	2.54	12	2.79	15	2.25	12	2.59	17.5
Problem at Ball Game	1.88	6	2.04	6	1.76	4	1.70	5.5	2.05	8
Show of Disrespect	1.77	4.5	1.75	4	1.82	5	1.70	5.5	1.77	4.5
Vandalism/Graffiti	2.63	14	2.68	13	2.64	9.5	2.50	15	2.68	21
Bullying Younger Ones	2.78	20	2.83	19.5	3.00	22	2.65	16	2.50	13
Cafeteria Duty Problem	2.76	18.5	2.88	21	2.79	15	2.75	17.5	2.59	17.5
Student Cliques	3.04	24	3.08	24	3.19	24	3.00	24	2.82	23.5
Bad Attitude/Won't Try	2.61	13	2.70	14.5	2.79	15	2.35	14	2.50	13
Practical Joker	2.88	23	2.79	18	3.06	23	2.90	20.5	2.68	21
Fighting in Classroom	2.83	21	2.96	22	2.87	17	2.95	22.5	2.50	13
Making Fun of Handicap	2.71	16	2.83	19.5	2.78	13	2.90	20.5	2.32	11
Playground Duty Problem	2.84	22	3.00	23	2.76	11.5	2.95	22.5	2.68	21
Chronic Lying	2.76	18.5	2.71	16	2.94	21	2.75	17.5	2.52	15.5
Firearm at School	1.23	1	1.30	1	1.21	1	1.10	1.5	1.32	1
Emotional Disturbance	2.07	8	2.08	7	2.27	8	1.90	7	1.91	6

As noted in Tables 1 and 2, overall average responses for the 24 disciplinary incidents ranked from most to least severe as follows: (1) firearm, (2) drugs, (3) alcohol, (4.5) stealing, (4.5) showing disrespect, (6) problem at extra-curricular activity, (7) excessive profanity, (8) emotional disturbance, (9) cheating, (10) fireworks, (11) chronic non-completion of homework, (12) smoking, (13) poor attitude, (14) vandalism, (15) display of affection, (16) making fun of handicapped student, (17) excessive tardiness, (18.5) cafeteria duty problem, (18.5) lying, (20) bullying, (21) fighting, (22) incident during playground duty, (23) practical joker, and

extremely severe to (3.04) a moderate problem. None of these incidents were viewed as minor infractions by any of the respondents groups.

Agreement between the respondent groups was measured by correlating the average group ratings across the 24 disciplinary incidents. Close to perfect agreement between principals and teachers ($r=.9692$) was noted in the severity ratings of the disciplinary incidents. A similar high level agreement was noted between the elementary and secondary levels ($r=.9333$) in rating the severity of these incidents. Correlating the ratings amongst the four respondent groups produced the results in Table 3. Again, high levels of agreement were noted with correlations ranging from $r=.8720$ to $r=.9608$. No significant differences were noted between levels of agreement.

Table 3
Correlations as Measures of Agreement Between
the Four Respondent Groups

	Elementary Principal	Secondary Principal	Elementary Teacher	Secondary Teacher
Elementary Principal	1.0000	.9401	.9608	.9316
Secondary Principal	.9401	1.0000	.8900	.9320
Elementary Teacher	.9608	.8900	1.0000	.8720
Secondary Teacher	.9316	.9320	.8720	1.0000

Average ratings for each of the 24 disciplinary incidents were contrasted across all respondent groups by position (principal or teacher) and level (elementary or secondary). The contrasts were conducted using a two-way analysis of variance procedure, tested at the .05 significance level. As observed in Table 4, there were no significant interaction results; thus, all significant differences could be explained by respondents' position or level. Significant differences were noted between average principal and teacher ratings on five disciplinary incidents. On each of these five, teachers rated the incident more severe than did principals: students cheating on a

Table 4

Position by Level Two-way ANOVA Results
for the 24 Disciplinary Incidents

Disciplinary Incident	Main Effects				Interaction	
	Position		Level		F	Prob
	F	Prob	F	Prob		
Excessive Profanity Used	1.410	.238	.315	.576	.265	.608
Drugs Are Observed	1.699	.196	.724	.397	.491	.485
Student Alcohol Odor	2.265	.136	3.256	.074	2.741	.101
Student Caught Smoking	3.376	.069	19.143	.000*	1.742	.190
Student Has Fireworks	3.928	.050	2.603	.110	1.946	.224
Excessive Tardiness	.020	.887	.066	.797	.625	.431
Students Kissing	6.960	.010*	1.442	.233	.205	.652
Student Caught Stealing	4.651	.034*	2.220	.140	1.359	.247
Student Cheats on Test	10.294	.002*	1.419	.236	.235	.629
Neglecting Homework	3.249	.075	4.701	.033*	.126	.724
Problem at Ball Game	.000	.985	.007	.934	3.737	.056
Show of Disrespect	.084	.772	.185	.668	.000	.989
Vandalism/Graffiti	.123	.726	.123	.726	.518	.474
Bullying Younger Ones	5.262	.024*	.039	.849	1.027	.313
Cafeteria Duty Problem	1.502	.223	.783	.378	.071	.790
Student Cliques	2.778	.099	.015	.902	.967	.328
Bad Attitude/Won't Try	5.211	.025*	.734	.394	.044	.835
Practical Joker	.892	.347	.127	.722	2.090	.152
Fighting in Classroom	1.598	.209	2.189	.142	1.232	.270
Making Fun of Handicap	1.999	.161	3.254	.074	2.829	.096
Playground Duty Problem	.139	.710	2.195	.142	.006	.941
Chronic Lying	1.312	.255	.043	.836	1.613	.207
Firearm at School	.054	.817	.093	.761	1.190	.278
Emotional Disturbance	2.939	.090	.468	.496	.298	.587

* $p < .05$

test; students kissing in school; bullying younger students; showing a bad attitude by not trying on a test; and student caught cheating. By level, only two significant differences were noted between average elementary and secondary responses. The severity of both of these disciplinary incidents was rated more severe at the elementary level than secondary: student caught smoking, and student not completing homework.

Conclusions

The purpose of this investigation was to get an ordering of the disciplinary incidents from the most severe to least severe for use in the subsequent study assessing principal and teacher perceptions of who is responsible for handling these situations. That purpose was achieved with the most severe incident being the firearm at school, followed by incidents involving drugs, alcohol and stealing. These findings are consistent with the recent national Gallup poll on education (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1991).

None of these discipline problems was regarded lightly; each was rated at least as a moderate problem, with firearms, drugs and alcohol problems rated extremely severe. Principals and teachers were in overall agreement on the relative severity of these problem situations. That consistency was found at both the elementary and secondary levels. Since discipline is the responsibility of all parties, teamwork should be developed among staff members for handling discipline problems (Stealy, 1990), effective school discipline policies should be developed (NAESP, 1981; Short & Clark, 1988) to clearly define the responsibilities for handling discipline problems (Foundation for Education Administration, 1982; Terrell, 1980) and to develop methods for preventing and remediating student misbehavior (Carson & Carson, 1984; Curwin & Mendler, 1988). However, in developing policies and determining responsibilities in handling discipline problems, the role and responsibility of the students should not be ignored. The National School Boards Association (1979) states what should be the goal of school discipline policies: to ensure the right of all students to a productive educational environment in which they may learn the social skills necessary to develop into mature, responsible young adults, accountable to their own actions. Further investigation into the ambiguity of who is responsible for handling specific disciplinary incidents should include student perceptions on the issue.

References

- Bruner, A. L. & B. D. Felder. (1983, March). Problems teachers encounter: How difficult is teaching? What is the principal's role? *NASSP Bulletin*, 67(461), 68-72.
- Calabrese, R. L. (1985, November). The principal and school discipline: An alternative. *NASSP Bulletin*, 69(484), 98-100.
- Carson, J. C. & P. Carson. (1984). *Any Teacher Can! Practical Strategies for Effective Classroom Management*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas Publishing. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 238 877)
- Curwin, R. L. & A. N. Mendler. (1988). *Discipline with Dignity*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Dellinger, A. M. (1981). North Carolina school law: The principal's role. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Institute of Government. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 233 468)
- Duke, D. L. (1977). A systematic management plan for school discipline. *NASSP Bulletin*, 61(405), 1-10.
- Easterly, J. L. (1983). Perceptions of outstanding elementary teachers about themselves and their profession. *Research Studies in Education, Technical Report Number 1*. Rochester, MI: Oakland University School of Human and Educational Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 238 854)
- Elam, S. M., Rose, L. C. & A. M. Gallup. (1991, September). The 23rd annual Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(1), 41-56.
- Foundation for Educational Administration. (1982). *Guidelines for the Appraisal of Policies and Procedures Governing Discipline and the Control of Violence and Vandalism*. Burlingame, CA: ACSA/Foundation Publications Department. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 239 359)
- Giannangelo, D. M. & M. G. Malone. (1987). *Teachers' Perceptions of the Principal's Role*. Memphis, TN: Memphis State University College of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 299 672)
- Kindsvatter, R., Wilen, W. & M. Ishler. (1988). *Dynamics of Effective Teaching*. White Plains, New York: Longman, Inc.

- Krajewski, R. J. (1977, April). *Role Implications of a Rank Ordering Process by Elementary Principals*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Elementary School Principals. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 140 468)
- McEwan, E. (1985, November). When students assess the principal. *Principal*, 65(2), 17-20.
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (1981, September). School discipline: Preventing problems. *School Management Handbook Number 1*. Arlington, Virginia: National Association of Elementary School Principals. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 222 987)
- National School Boards Association. (1979). Student discipline: Practical approaches. *NSBA Research Report*, 1-29.
- Newberg, N. A. & A. A. Glatthorn. (1982). *Instructional Leadership: Four Ethnographic Studies on Junior High School Principals*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 236 808)
- Richardson, M. S. (1985). Perceptions of principals and teachers on effective management of student behavior. *Spectrum*, 3(3), 25-30.
- Sanford, J. P., Emmer, E. T. & B. S. Clements. (1983). Improving classroom management. *Educational Leadership*, 40(7), 56-60.
- Short, P. M. (1988, January). Effectively disciplined schools: Three themes from research. *NASSP Bulletin*, 72(504), 1-3.
- Short, P. M. & S. Clark. (1988). The effect of a school-wide discipline management program on school discipline. *Educational and Psychological Research*, 8(3), 203-212.
- Stealy, M. (1990, June). A heavy hand won't help create a climate for discipline. *Executive Educator*, 12(6), 24-25.
- Terrell, H. W. (1980, December). Better use of staff time to improve student behavior. *NASSP Bulletin*, 64(440), 82-86.
- Turner, R. R. (1987). What are the critical problems in teaching? And how can they be solved? Here's what teachers say, part 1. *Learning*, 15(7), 58-63.